

Normandy Invasion

The Allied invasion (code name, Operation Overlord) of France's Normandy region during WORLD WAR II began on June 6, 1944 (D-Day). The operation, which landed about 1 million troops by July 1, was under the supreme command of Gen. Dwight D. EISENHOWER. The Germans, unaware of the exact invasion point, had 50 infantry and 10 panzer (tank) divisions dispersed in France and the Low Countries under the command of Field Marshal Gerd von RUNDSTEDT.

For the two months preceding D-Day, British-based aircraft had systematically bombed rail lines, bridges and air fields on French soil. Throughout the preceding night, paratroops were dropped inland to disrupt enemy communications. Naval guns pounded shore installations, and in the early daylight at low tide about 5,000 Allied ships approached the Normandy coastline. The British and Canadians moved in smoothly at the eastern landing points--Gold, Juno, and Sword beaches, above Caen--as did the Americans (under Omar BRADLEY) at Utah Beach, the westernmost landing site. At Omaha Beach, pivot of the landings, American troops securing their bridgehead were met by heavy German gunfire. Within five days, 16 Allied divisions had landed in Normandy, and the final drive to liberate Europe was under way.

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Corregidor

{kuh-reg'-i-dor}

Corregidor is an island at the entrance to Manila Bay about 5 km (3 mi) off BATAAN Peninsula and is part of Cavite province of the Philippines. Its area is 5 sq km (2 sq mi). Of strategic importance, it was once called the Gibraltar of the East. The island served as a fortress and penal colony under the Spanish. After the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States extended the fortifications, establishing Fort Mills and Kindley Field. During World War II, American and Filipino forces on Corregidor made a last effort to resist the Japanese invasion of the Philippines. After the fall of Bataan on Apr. 9, 1942, U.S. forces on Corregidor had no way to receive supplies, and on May 6, Lt. Gen. Jonathan M. WAINWRIGHT surrendered with more than 10,000 troops, medical personnel, and civilians. Retaken in February 1945, the island became an official part of the Philippine Republic in 1947 and is now a national shrine.

Bulge, Battle of the

The Battle of the Bulge, or Battle of the Ardennes, fought from Dec. 16, 1944, to Jan. 31, 1945, was Germany's last major attempt to turn back the Allied invasion of Europe in WORLD WAR II. German forces under generals Gerd von Rundstedt and Hasso von Manteuffel drove a wedge (the Bulge) into Allied lines through the Ardennes on the Franco-Belgian frontier. They were halted chiefly by the U.S. 1st and 3d armies, the latter under Gen. George PATTON, and forced to retreat. Snowstorms contributed to the heavy casualties on both sides.

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